

Testimony for Public Hearing

House Revenue Committee

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HB 4153 – A Bill for An Act Relating to limitations on gambling using personal electronic devices

Good Evening House Revenue Committee Members. My name is Nathaniel Peterson and I am a gambling addictions counselor and problem gambling advocate for Volunteers of America Oregon, I am also in long-term recovery from a gambling disorder. Volunteers of America Oregon has a long history of treating those affected by problem gambling and to advocate for those that suffer from this devastating disorder.

The Oregon State Lottery offers so many ways for individuals to access and play Oregon Lottery games. With the roll out of the Scoreboard App it appears that access to Oregon Lottery games is limitless?! Gambling is legal and is an accepted form of entertainment today, 50 years ago two states offered legalized gambling. Today there are two states that don't have any form of legalized gambling. What we know is that the easier the access to gambling is, more people are going to gamble. Many studies show these findings.

The National Council on Problem Gambling and other sources note that 15 percent of Americans gamble at least once a week and that approximately two to three percent of Americans meet criteria for a gambling disorder. For Oregon that comes to eighty to one-hundred thousand citizens that meet criteria for problem gambling. A study by Georgia State University estimates that about 50 percent of problem gamblers commit crimes, and 2/3 of those crimes were directly related to their gambling. (<https://casinorank.com/gambling-addiction/gambling-addiction-statistics/>)

Studies for online gambling show that the fastest growing segment of the population involved in online gambling is college age men. With the onset of legalized online gambling the danger to those individuals continues to increase. The study from the University of Connecticut showed that in the group that frequently gambled online, 61 percent were pathological gamblers. In comparison, only 5 percent of non-internet gambler were considered to have a gambling problem. (<https://casinorank.com/gambling-addiction/gambling-addiction-statistics/>)

I am supportive of H. B. 4153 so that the Oregon State Lottery may not offer any game that is playable on a mobile phone, personal computer, or other electronic device except for the Scoreboard app and multistate lottery drawings that were offered in more than 30 states as of January 1, 2019.

After attending many conferences about online sports betting what became apparent to me is that no one really knows what the outcome will be. We know there is a cost to be paid for gambling, I see it every day. We don't know, and I hope that the State of Oregon would do a study, what is the cost economically and the citizens and families of Oregon?

While I speak as a professional and an advocate, I also speak as a recovering compulsive gambler who experienced the devastation of this disease. In 2008, I was dealing with depression and the loss of my father. I found solace in the video lottery games which allowed me to escape the emotional pain I was suffering. Over a short period of time (about 2 years) my gambling led me away from the values and beliefs I was raised with. I soon found myself stealing money from work, my daughters piggy bank, and at times losing my whole paycheck for a few hours of gambling on Video Lottery Machines. It took me to the darkest depths I've ever experienced and yet I could not stop! Not until I finally got caught was I able to get the help I needed and found a life of recovery for myself and my family. I almost lost everything for that one thing (gambling) but fortunately I was able to give up that one thing and now have everything. I don't want anybody to suffer what I and my family suffered through. No person should have to. The State of Oregon is mandated to protect its citizens from harm. We don't need to offer more and ease of access to gambling, in Oregon. We have more than enough as it is.

Again, I urge your support of HB 4153 and I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Peterson, CGAC II, CADC II